

CJFE honours Ken Rubin, Safa Al Ahmad and Jameel Jaffer at 2015 Gala *Introduces new award to celebrate investigative work in Canada*

TORONTO (November 2) – Canadian Journalists for Free Expression (CJFE) will honour Saudi freelance journalist Safa Al Ahmad with the International Press Freedom Award and US-based lawyer Jameel Jaffer with the Vox Libera Award at the 2015 CJFE Gala on December 2, 2015, in Toronto. This year, CJFE will also present veteran investigative journalist Ken Rubin with the first-ever CJFE Investigative Award.

“CJFE’s Gala is a powerful event for telling the stories that would go untold without dedicated free expression defenders like Safa, Jameel and Ken,” said Tom Henheffer, CJFE’s Executive Director. We’re excited to shine a spotlight on Canada as well, with our new Investigative Award. It recognizes the efforts of Canadians who dig up the kinds of stories that demonstrate time and again that what we don’t know, does hurt us.”

Award recipients are as follows:

CJFE Investigative Award

Ken Rubin is a public interest researcher and consultant with 50 years of experience. He has worked tirelessly to shed light on government secrecy and privacy and surveillance practices.

Driven by the conviction that Canadians are entitled to know exactly what the government is up to, Rubin has filed and researched thousands of Access to Information requests, resulting in hundreds of important media stories and reports. His work includes the federal government’s involvement in Maher Arar’s arrest, Canada’s support of the asbestos industry and the influence of lobbyists on the crafting of Canada’s Food Guide. He was also instrumental in the creation of Canada’s Access to Information laws, and has launched Federal Court actions promoting privacy protections and the right to information, which have become landmark decisions strengthening the rights of Canadians.

Rubin is the winner of the inaugural CJFE Investigative Award. This award goes to a journalist, investigative researcher or media worker who has made a significant contribution to advancing investigative public interest reporting in Canada.

International Press Freedom Award

Safa Al Ahmad is a Saudi freelance journalist and documentary filmmaker who has taken grave personal risks to produce documentaries on uprisings in the Middle East, most notably in Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Al Ahmad’s 2014 BBC documentary about a largely unreported mass uprising in Saudi Arabia’s Eastern Province brought international attention to the large-scale violence on peaceful demonstrators.

Filming this documentary, Al Ahmad frequently put her life in danger and faced risks from all sides; not only is travel by a woman alone in Saudi Arabia strictly limited, but travelling with footage of the protests opened her up to arrest.

Al Ahmad will be presented with the International Press Freedom Award. This award recognizes the outstanding courage of journalists who work at great personal risk and against enormous odds so that the news media remain free.

Vox Libera Award

Jameel Jaffer is a Canadian-born, US-based lawyer, deputy legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), director of the Center for Democracy, and board member of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association. Jaffer is one of the preeminent critics of American national security policy and its infringement of human rights at home and abroad. His work at the ACLU has focused on free speech, technology, targeted government killings and surveillance.

Jaffer is the recipient of the Vox Libera Award, which is given to a Canadian who has made an important and sustained contribution to the principles of free expression at home or abroad.

About CJFE

Canadian Journalists for Free Expression (CJFE) monitors, defends and reports on free expression and access to information in Canada and abroad. Rooted in the field of journalism, CJFE promotes a free media as essential to a fair and open society. CJFE boldly champions the free expression rights of all people, and encourages and supports individuals and groups in the protection of their own and others' free expression rights. For more information, visit cjfe.org

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